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RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ISRAEL FROM THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM TO THE REFORM OF JOSIAH.

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Influence of the monarchy in Israel.—The king an absolute ruler.—Burdens placed upon the people.—Relation of the court to social life.—Hopeless condition of the poor man.—Slavery for debt.—Influence of the conditions created by a monarchy on religion.—The sacrificial meal and its perversions.—The prophets and their work.—Conflict between the prophets and the kings.—Teaching of the prophets.—Righteousness.—The remnant.—Golden age.—Messianic king.—Monotheism.—Israel's election.—The prophets' gospel and their knowledge of the Spirit of God.

THE struggle of the prophets against the oppressions of the kings and the rich and powerful ruling classes constitutes the religious history of Israel during the period of the divided kingdom. The key to the understanding of this struggle is found in the nature of the monarchy and its effect on the social and religious life of the people.

During the period of the judges the leaders in Israel had striven to unite the scattered clans, that the people might maintain themselves against external enemies. A kingdom was inevitable, but it brought with it most serious social evils. The king was an absolute ruler. Anything else in the way of a kingdom was utterly impossible for Israel at that time. Oriental kings have always been absolute despots. Samuel's prediction, when the people begged for a king, proved true to the letter. "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them unto him for his chariots, . . . and he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and he will set some of them to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, . . . and he will take your daughters to be his

cooks, . . . and he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.”¹

Solomon's retinue, according to the account in 1 Kings, chap. 4, consisted of military officers, chiefs of the commissary department and household and court attendants including stewards, scribes, and priests, besides the heads of the levies raised for the special purpose of fortifying Jerusalem and building royal palaces. The ostensible duty of the army was to protect the nation from enemies, and it was useful so long as Israel was struggling for national existence, but in times of peace the army became a menace. The king too often used it to enforce unjust exactions and to carry on plundering expeditions among the neighboring nations for his own glory. In an empire like Assyria the main support of the army and court was obtained by plundering foreign nations, but all the Israelites could plunder from the Philistines, Moabites, and other neighboring tribes scarcely paid the expenses of the expeditions, and the main support of the court had to be borne by the people themselves. A little reflection will make us feel that 1 Kings, chap. 4, is not a description of Solomon's glory but of his shame. How great a change since Saul returned to his work as a husbandman after being appointed king! The delicacies on Solomon's table were obtained by taxing the tables of the people, and no adequate return was made for them. The commissary officers appointed by Solomon were all too similar to the tax collectors who curse the East today. Their duty was to supply the revenues needed at court, and the means by which they obtained them were little investigated. Add to this the forced labor that Solomon employed on his gorgeous buildings, and we get some idea of the burden which the court placed upon the people. We should be glad to think that the accounts in Kings and Chronicles of Solomon's magnificence and the methods by which he supported his court are overdrawn, but the outcome shows that the sad record is all too true. Nor can we say that Solomon enriched Israel by establishing a legitimate foreign trade with surrounding nations.

¹ 1 Sam. 8:11 ff.

The cedars from Phoenicia and the horses from Egypt had to be paid for with wheat grown in Canaan, and these luxuries went to enrich the king, not the people. Solomon taxed the people to buy luxuries for his court. In these transactions there is little trace of a commerce between peoples for mutual benefit. Besides the military and commissary officers, there was a vast horde of court attendants, stewards, grooms, household servants, and favorites of the king, who swarmed about and fattened on the court. Even that worst feature of an oriental monarchy, a harem, was introduced into Jerusalem by Solomon. In such a court the king is almost wholly at the mercy of sycophants who make it their business to flatter and deceive him for their own ends. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, experienced the evils of such counselors.

It was a redeeming feature that the army and court had no necessary connection with the internal and social relations of the people. Originally the sole duty of the king was to protect the nation from outside enemies. The people did not ask for a king to regulate their social relations, but to fight their battles. The relations of private and social life were fixed by customs handed down from the fathers. Even the administration of justice did not rightly belong to the king. The ancient customs of private right and blood revenge lingered long after the kingdom was established. True, the king claimed the right to interfere in private affairs when he chose; but it was no part of his duty to enforce justice between individuals. A good king may at times have interfered in behalf of justice (*cf.* 1 Kings 3:16), but more commonly such interference was to carry out some whim of his own, or because he was induced by some individual to help a private scheme; so that the king's interference was usually perverse of the customs and habits of the people and greatly dreaded by them.

The burden of this court might perhaps have been borne had it not been for its indirect influence. It introduced into the nation a desire for wealth and luxury. It set the example of oppression and extortion. It broke up the equality and fraternity of a pastoral people, and set up classes in society. An

aristocracy of wealth quickly sprang up, and each in his sphere sought to imitate the court in luxury and unscrupulousness. As the nation became rich cities sprang up and the simple habits and life of the pastoral tribes were revolutionized. The contagion of fraud and violence spread through all classes. The rich flaunted abroad their pride. The poor were trodden in the dust.

Two things made the case of the poor man hopeless. The impossibility of securing redress for wrongs, and the right of a creditor to sell a debtor into slavery for debt. In olden times the elders in a clan or town heard the complaints of their clansmen and administered justice according to the traditions of the tribe, but now the spirit of greed for wealth and position had broken down the simple pastoral society. The judges had become venal or owed their place to the favoritism of the king or court. The city with its heterogeneous population was fast taking the place of the community of kindred. Still no check had been placed on the power of the judge to decide cases according to his own will, and the result was he decided according to the bribes offered him. It became necessary to take a present whenever one went to a judge. Nor would the poor man fare better in the hands of the priest. The sanctuaries were supported by the presents of the people, and the rich found no difficulty in securing priests who would be willing tools in their hands. Even when a good king were on the throne, how could a poor man get his case before him? Worse even for the poor man was the custom by which a creditor had the right to seize the person of a debtor and sell him into slavery to recover his debt. Amos testifies that persons were sold as slaves to recover so small a debt as the price of a pair of sandals. "They have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for *the price of* a pair of shoes."¹ Under such a system the poor man was helpless. All he could look forward to was slavery, and slavery even might seem desirable; for a master feeds and cares for his slave, but the tax gatherer and creditor strip one and leave him to starve.

The new conditions under the monarchy were no less disastrous to the religious than to the social life of the people. The

¹ Amos 2:6.

true Jehovah worship was the sacrificial meal in the family or clan. This worship is described in Deuteronomy, where the Israelite is bidden to take his tithes, firstborn, vows, and other sacrifices and eat them before the Lord: "Thou, and thy son and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hand unto."¹

The essential features in this worship are: communion with Jehovah in the sacrificial meal, equality of the whole family, including slaves, at the table of Jehovah, and thankful remembrance of the blessings they are receiving from their God.

Partaking of this meal is a token of the blood covenant between Jehovah and his people. If any member of the family has sinned the covenant is broken, and the guilty person cannot come to Jehovah's table till the sin is atoned for and the covenant renewed.

It is now well established that before the centralization of the worship in Israel all slaughter of sacrificial animals, that is, domestic animals, was sacrifice. The altar was in every home and whenever an ox or sheep was slaughtered the blood was poured on the altar, parts of the animal burned, and the rest eaten in a sacrificial meal. This fact, that all slaughter was sacrifice, throws a flood of light on the nature of the worship in Israel. In those times, when the preservation of meat was little known, the slaughter of an ox or sheep was an occasion for several families or a whole village to come together and join in the meal. There was thus a public altar on a high place or under a tree near each village. In 1 Sam., chap. 9, there is a vivid description of such a meal at which the prophet Samuel was present and blessed the sacrifice before the people sat down to eat. At the great sanctuaries, like Bethel, Shechem, and Gibeon, such sacrificial meals were given on a still larger scale. Especially were the numerous feast days seasons of rejoicing, chief among which were the three great harvest feasts—the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, and the feast of

¹ Deut. 12 : 18.

ingathering. The kings gave sacrificial feasts to the people at their coronations and on other great occasions. We are told that at the sacrificial meal given to the people by Solomon at the dedication of the temple 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were consumed. A striking confirmation of the fact that all slaughter was sacrifice is found in the incident connected with Saul's vow recorded in 1 Sam., chap. 14. It is counted a sin that the people in their hunger slaughtered and ate without the proper sacrificial rites.

Simple and beautiful as this sacrificial-meal worship was, we can readily see the dangers that beset it when cities multiplied and the nation became rich and prosperous under the monarchy. Evils came both from within and without. The rich flaunted their luxury and ostentation even at Jehovah's table. The poor were crowded out. The sacrificial meals were made seasons of reveling and drunkenness. Listen to Amos' description of these feasts. "Come to Bethel and transgress; to Gilgal and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning and your tithes every three days . . . and proclaim free-will offerings and publish them.¹ . . . Ye that put far away the evil day and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; . . . that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."²

Even worse perversions, if that were possible, came from the introduction into Jehovah worship of debasing practices borrowed from the Canaanites and other heathen neighbors. In the great sanctuaries of the northern kingdom bull idols were set up as representations of Jehovah, and the vilest practices of Canaanite worship introduced into Jehovah's feasts. The nature of the sacrificial meal shows us why Israel was so strictly forbidden to intermingle with other peoples. When all slaughter was sacrifice, to eat at a foreigner's table meant to participate in

¹ Amos 4 : 4.

² Amos 6 : 3-6.

the sacrifice to a foreign god. But whenever the nation of Israel became wealthy and powerful the temptation to make foreign alliances arose. Solomon yielded to it, and it was the alliance with Phœnicia and the introduction of the worship of the Phœnician Baal into Israel that led to the overthrow of the dynasty of Ahab in Israel, and brought the house of David in Judah to the verge of extinction. These terrible evils ruined the sacrificial meal and led finally to the removal of sacrifice from the home and the local sanctuary and to the centralization of all legitimate Jehovah worship in the one sanctuary at Jerusalem. We cannot, however, agree with writers like George Adam Smith, who represent the ritual in early Israel as inherently bad and always a temptation to the people. Neither did the prophets oppose all ritual, but only the evils introduced into the ritual. Is it possible to believe that Amos, who is as outspoken as any of the prophets in his denunciation of sacrifices, had no sacrificial meals in his own home at Tekoah, or that he slaughtered domestic animals for food without pouring the blood on Jehovah's altar? Samuel, we know, partook of sacrificial meals, and we must believe that all the other prophets in the period before the centralization of the worship did also. With the introduction of these evils the zeal for worship increased. The Jehovah temples were gorgeously supplied, and it was the delight of the wealthy and luxurious nobles in the growing cities of Israel to hold great sacrificial meals which degenerated to mere drunken revels, and to tax the people to support them. In the passage quoted from Amos we are told they proclaimed offerings and the bringing of tithes every three days. They thought to atone for their moral obliquity by zeal for the forms of religion, and to win the favor of Jehovah in spite of their sins.

Such social and religious evils were not peculiar to Israel, but have been common to all oriental monarchies, and slavery or a condition worse than slavery has usually been the fate of the poor man in the eastern countries, for he has found no one to champion his cause. Israel was unique in that in her the poor and oppressed found champions. These champions of the poor were the religious reformers of the nation. Most of them

belonged to the sect of the *Nebiim*, which had arisen during the revival under Samuel. Hence we call them prophets, but we must remember that it is not in the sense of foreteller that the name describes their work. They were rather preachers, or better reform preachers, for it was only an occasional preacher among the *Nebiim* that took a bold stand against the social evils of his day. They themselves denounce many of their fellow *Nebiim* as false prophets ready to pamper to the vices of the rich rulers. Outside the ranks of the *Nebiim* also brave reformers arose, such as Amos, who was a simple husbandman from the little village Tekoah. The nobles, judges, and priests furnished few noted names among these champions of social righteousness. But we must not think they came wholly from the lower classes and the poor. Isaiah, the greatest of them all, may have belonged to the royal family.

The history of the struggle which these men waged against the evils we have described is recounted in detail in the Book of Kings and the writings of the prophets themselves. We can only review it in briefest outline. The 350 years from Solomon to the captivity of Judah was a succession of periods of prosperity followed by periods of revolution and decline. Four times was this round repeated. Each century had its mountain peak of prosperity and its valley of decline. It was during the periods of political prosperity that the social and religious evils poured into the nation. Then and not in the periods of decline was the national religion in danger. When the nation seemed outwardly in a career of glory, the rich oppressed the poor, the judges became venal, foreign vices poured in and the worship of foreign gods was set up. Then also the great prophets arose. They made their predictions of coming evil while the sky was yet clear. These predictions are moral judgments based on the unrighteousness which is rife in the nation and in which they see the tokens of the coming disasters. To the prophet's eye the doom of the nation is written in its sins more clearly than in the growing world powers of Assyria and Babylonia.

To study one of these crises is to know the leading features of each. In the tenth century it was the oppressions of Solomon

that led the prophet Ahijah to head a rebellion that resulted in the division of David's kingdom. Jeroboam I was the leader whom the prophets intrusted with the command, and his base desertion of the principles of the prophets as soon as success was assured made the "sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat" a byword forever in Israel. In the ninth century the powerful Omri and Ahab in Israel stopped the fratricidal war that had been going on since the division of the kingdom, and brought back prosperity. The account of Naboth's vineyard, the introduction of Baal worship from Phœnicia, and the alliance with Syria, when Ahab's army fought side by side with Benhadad at the battle of Karkar, are examples of the evils that poured in with returning prosperity. Elijah and Elisha opposed these evils, fought the Baal worship, and aroused Jehu to overthrow the house of Ahab. These revolutions so weakened Israel that they fell into the hands of the Syrians, and the nation declined for fifty years. Again, in the middle of the eighth century, the powerful Jeroboam II in Israel and Uzziah in Judah restored once more on a larger scale the empire of David. Once more Israel became rich and prosperous. This was the golden age of the nation. But once more pride and oppression and vice of all kinds poured into the land. Then arose Israel's greatest group of prophets. Amos and Hosea preached in the northern kingdom, and Isaiah and Micah in the southern. The great aim of Isaiah was to prevent alliances with the empires of Assyria and Egypt, which were so disastrous to the moral and religious life of Israel. As before, the evils and oppressions of the period of prosperity resulted in revolutions. The nations fell into anarchy, and, in spite of all the prophets could do, became an easy prey to the intrigues of the rising empire of Assyria. But the nation was not reformed, and in the returning prosperity under Manasseh, during the lull between the downfall of Assyria and the rise of Babylonia, the social and religious evils in Judah took a new start and became worse than ever before. Jeremiah, who preached at the close of the seventh century, was the last great prophet before the exile. The nation was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and Jerusalem destroyed in 586 B. C.

In each of these periods the conditions described under Solomon were in broad outline the same, though the special form of the conflict between the prophets and the kings varied in the different periods. In the tenth and ninth centuries the struggle was against the establishment of an absolute monarchy and the introduction into Israel of foreign gods. In the eighth century the struggle was more against the oppressions and injustice of the wealthy classes and vice and corruption at home. The reform of Josiah in the seventh century was mainly for the purification of the ritual, to which end the prophets aimed to centralize the whole worship in Jerusalem. But in each case the real conflict was for social righteousness. Each prophet came forward as the defender of the oppressed, and just judgment and righteous dealing was the burden of his preaching. But the struggle was a hopeless one. In spite of the heroic efforts of the prophets, the evils of class spirit and oppression of the poor became worse, until the growing world powers of Assyria and Babylonia swallowed up the little kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and put an end to the prophets' fond hope of reforming the nation. And even if the nation had not been thus ruthlessly destroyed, we scarcely see how, with their social system, the Mosaic ideal of a theocracy or the prophetic hope of a Messianic kingdom could ever have been realized. The prophets themselves, after Isaiah, recognized the hopelessness of the struggle. It was not because they saw the rising power of Babylonia, but the impossibility of reforming Israel, that they looked to the exile as a necessity, and set their hopes on a return from exile and a new and purified community in which the poor and weak would have a better chance for justice. But though the nation went into exile the teaching of the prophets remained. No particle of their work was lost. The whole of it was a prophecy and more than a prophecy, a preparation for Christ and the kingdom of God which is yet to be fully realized in the world.

The principle which lay at the basis of all prophetic preaching is that religion is righteousness. They set themselves squarely against the prevalent idea that Jehovah's favor could be won by costly temples and zeal for the ritual, while unright-

eousness existed in social life. And never before or since has this fundamental truth of religion been thundered in the ears of the people with such persistency and reiteration and in such varying forms. Every prophet made it the burden of his preaching. Ahab, rejoicing over his success in depriving Naboth of his possessions, was confronted by Elijah with the awful message: "Hast thou killed and also taken possession? . . . In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."¹ In the height of the glory of the northern kingdom the riotous feasters in the great sanctuary at Bethel were startled by the rough herdsman Amos proclaiming in the name of Jehovah: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies, . . . but let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. . . . Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for *the price of* a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat."² Micah sums up his charges against Jerusalem in the words: "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us."³ Answering the almost petulant question of the people who suppose they can please Jehovah with offerings, the same prophet breaks out in perhaps the most wonderful of all definitions of true religion: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"⁴ Isaiah's book begins with an arraignment of the nation. "Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me . . . yea when ye make many prayers I will not hear your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put

¹ 1 Kings 21:19.

³ Micah 3:11.

² Amos 5:21 ff.; 8:4 ff.

⁴ Micah 6:8.

away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."¹

The prophets found the sanction for this preaching in the national experience. They taught that the national calamities were sent upon the people of Jehovah as punishment for their sins. The practical application of the view that pestilence, famine, and deliverance into the hands of enemies is direct punishment is easy when we remember that the prophets preached on the basis of nationalism. The nation stood or fell before Jehovah as a unit. The sins of individuals made the nation guilty, and the punishment came upon the nation. That the innocent must suffer with the guilty when the punishment came was taken as a matter of course. Such views led to the doctrine of the remnant. These national punishments purify the people and leave a righteous remnant. "I will thoroughly purge away thy dross and take away all thy alloy Afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city."² At times even it seems as if the prophets expected that when the calamity came it would fall upon the sinners alone and every righteous man would escape. "For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword."³

As the evils increased and the prospect of a reform of the nation as a whole grew less, the thoughts of the prophets centered more and more on the remnant, and about it clustered the most glorious hopes for the golden age. "And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof."⁴ The hopes for the golden age were not confined to Israel. It was to be a time of universal peace, and blessings would flow out from

¹ Isa. I : 13 ff.

³ Amos 9 : 9-10.

² Isa. I : 25-6.

⁴ Isa. 4 : 3-4.

Jehovah's people over all the earth. "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, as dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass; that tarrieth not for man nor waiteth for the sons of men."¹ With such hopes the prophets sought to inspire the nation and comfort the righteous poor groaning under the burdens of their oppressors.

In the golden age the king would be righteous. It was impossible for them to conceive of a society other than a kingdom, but the king would not be such as those then cursing the nation, but a true descendant of David, to whom the prophets always looked back as their ideal king. "And he shall stand and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God."² "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."³ This was a true Messianic hope, although not till after the exile did the prophets conceive of a suffering Messiah or that their Saviour was to be more than a man.

The thought that Jehovah was using the mighty armies of Assyria and Babylonia as instruments with which to punish Israel wonderfully enlarged their conceptions of God, and the last traces of the idea that Jehovah was simply the God of Israel vanished from the teachings of the prophets of the eighth century in Israel. Amos makes his appeals in the name of the God who is the Creator of the whole universe. "Seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion . . . Jehovah is his name."⁴ They even go so far as to deny the peculiar election of Israel, when they find the people trusting in it rather than in repentance and righteousness; and declare that Israel is no more to Jehovah than the Ethiopians in distant Africa. "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?"

¹ Micah 5 : 7.

³ Isa. 11 : 2 ff.

² Micah 5 : 4.

⁴ Amos 5 : 8.

saith the Lord. "Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?"¹ Or they proclaim that Israel was not elected to favor, but to responsibility. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."²

But not simply did the prophets receive visions of Jehovah as the Holy King surrounded by seraphim or the Righteous Judge sending punishment in wrath upon evildoers; they learned to know him as a loving father seeking the prodigal, or as a tender husband eager to win back his sinful bride. All the prophets, even Amos, preached Jehovah's love, but Hosea's experience led him into the very heart of the gospel. No prophet realized Israel's sins like Hosea, for none of the others experienced them so deeply. The sins so common in the northern kingdom entered Hosea's own home and robbed him of his wife and broke up his family. Hosea had truly loved his wife, and the impulses of his noble nature compelled him to love her still, though she had become a vile thing. After this sad experience he realized as never before the feelings of Jehovah toward apostate Israel. His own heart gave him a glimpse into the heart of Jehovah. He had preached of Jehovah's mercy before, but after this experience the people must have felt added tenderness and power in his message as he described to them the sin against love, and appealed to them in the name of a love that outlasts sin. "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, . . . O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, . . . I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him; I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."³

As we find among these prophets the true gospel, so too they had a true knowledge of the Spirit of God. We sometimes think that in ancient Israel the Spirit was only sent as an enduement for some special work, and the continued presence of the Spirit was not realized till after Pentecost. But study of the lives of the prophets leads us to conclude that they

¹ Amos 9 : 7.

² Amos 3 : 2.

³ Hosea 11 : 8; 14 : 4-5.

believed themselves under the constant guidance of the Spirit of Jehovah. Elijah is led by the Spirit in all, even the little, acts of his life. The prophets depended on the Spirit to give them a message whenever they preached to the people. This fact, that the prophets received the messages of Jehovah from the Spirit of Jehovah in their hearts, is what distinguished the prophet in Israel from the heathen diviner and soothsayer, who resorted to divination and omens to obtain the will of his god. The prophet needed no divination, for he had the living word of the Spirit of God in his heart.

Can we overestimate the religious life among a people with teachers such as these prophets? Evils were truly many and terrible, but so they are today, and there is an astonishing similarity between the social sins with which the church contends and those which confronted the prophets in ancient Israel. We believe the world advances, but pride in wealth, greed for dishonest gain, oppression of the poor, and formality and class spirit in religion are the evils that curse our social life and discourage the modern reformer who seeks to follow in the footsteps of the prophets. In the darkest hour Elijah was told that there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed to Baal, and we may be sure that at all times in Israel there were many, many earnest persons who listened gladly to the teaching of the prophets and served Jehovah with as clear a view of the requirements of true religion and as deep an experience of the love and mercy of Jehovah as is possible for a Christian today.